
*A baby whale abandoned by its mother in the waters off north Sydney has been **put down** after vets decided it could not survive on its own. The 4.5 metre long animal has been called Colin and its story has interested the whole country. From Sydney, here's Nick Bryant*

Two things have **captured the Australian national imagination** this week - the Beijing Olympics and **the plight of** Colin, the baby humpback whale. Ever since Sunday, the injured and abandoned whale has been creating headlines, with **tear-inducing stories** of how it tried **to suckle** the hulls of boats, which it apparently mistook for its mother.

Officials believe the one to two month old calf was abandoned, possibly because it was ill. But their attempts **to lure it out to sea** in the hope it would attach itself to **a passing pod of humpback whales** failed.

Colin kept on swimming back to the waters off north Sydney. Since the whale was being breast fed, there was no way of feeding him. So the decision was taken to put it down. The whale was first given a sedative to relax it, then **a lethal dose of anaesthetic**. With Colin apparently being attacked by sharks, vets and marine researchers concluded it was **the only humane option**.

Nick Bryant, BBC, Sydney

Vocabulary and definitions

put down	forbidden, stopped allowing
stricken Irrawaddy delta	killed in a kind, painless way to stop pain and suffering
captured the Australian national imagination	has been of great emotional interest to the people of Australia
the plight of	the difficult and sad situation of
tear-inducing stories	reports which make people cry
to suckle	to feed like a young animal that takes milk from its mother
to lure it out to sea	to guide and lead it away from shallow water
a passing pod of humpback whales	a group of similar whales that was moving through the area
a lethal dose of anaesthetic	an amount of pain-killing medicine that would cause death
the only humane option	the best and kindest thing to do to stop the suffering of Colin because there was no chance of his surviving

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Read and listen to the story and the vocabulary online:

http://www.bbclearningenglish.com/newsenglish/witn/2008/08/080522_australia_whale.shtml